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The Cryptozoology Review
Vol. 1, No. 3, Winter-Spring 1997
Editor/Publisher: Ben S. Roesch
Associate Editor: John Moore
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The Editor's Page
Welcome to the third issue of The Cryptozoology Review. Beginning with this issue, we will appear only three times a year, instead of four times, as we did previously. Therefore, you will now see TCR in your mailbox every four months in the designations of Summer, Autumn and Winter-Spring. This change also means that there will be a reduction in the subscription dues for this publication. The new prices for a one-year subscription are as follows (all include the cost of air mail shipping and are in Canadian dollars): $9.00 in Canada, $11.00 (or $8.00 American) in the US, $14.00 (or the equivalent in any currency) in all other countries.
We are sorry to make these changes, but publishing on a quarterly schedule was impossible, due to prior commitments to our time.
Those of you who subscribed prior to these changes will still receive the number of issues you paid for. We will enclose a letter stating that it is time to renew in the final issue of your [AD] subscription.
Finally, I hope you enjoy this issue.
-- Ben S. Roesch
Editor/Publisher: Ben S. Roesch
Associate Editor: John Moore
Contributing Editors: Bufo Calvin, Loren Coleman, Darren Naish, Gordon Rutter
Correspondents: Dr Peter Darben (Australia), Peter Massaro (United Kingdom)
Artists: Darren Naish, Russ Fletcher
Editorial Consultants: Ellen D. Timiney, Robert Tuck Jr.
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On The Cover: Smaller British carnivorans. See PP. 23-31.
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Letters and
Communications
We welcome letters on any thoughts you may have about TCR or is contents. If you write us a letter, please tell us whether or not it is fine with you to publish it in the "Letters and Communications" section of upcoming issues.
Review of In Search of Prehistoric Survivors A Response From the Author
I wish to correct a number of ill-founded claims concerning my book In Search of Prehistoric Survivors made by John Moore in his review (The Cryptozoology Review, Vol. 1, No. 2, Pp. 29-30).
To claim, as Moore has done, that my book contains "many zoological errors" and then to identify only one of these so-called errors is verging upon the libelous in my opinion - and especially when even the one "error" that he does note is an error on his part, not mine.

Moore states: "Shuker speaks of 'aquatic' dinosaurs; all known dinosaurs were terrestrial or, at best, amphibious". Judging from this statement, Moore apparently assumes that the word "aquatic" refers specifically to animals that are exclusively water-dwelling. This is, of course, absolute nonsense. Ducks, geese and swans, for instance, are aquatic birds, but they readily walk on land and fly through the air, as well as swim on and under the water. However, I have yet to read of anyone referring to "amphibious ducks"! - unless of course Moore has plans to begin a new trend in zoological terminology?!

Certain dinosaurs, particularly hadrosaurs, may well have retreated into deep water when pursued by predators. Moreover, based upon

various modifications such as deep laterally-flattened tails and paddle-like hands, a longstanding paleontological controversy exists as to whether hadrosaurs were capable of strong swimming. It was issues such as these that induced me to use the zoologically non-specific phrase "aquatic dinosaurs," and I am perfectly correct, zoologically and etymologically, in doing so. Perhaps Moore should pay less attention to cryptozoological matters and more to his English studies at school?

In reply to his impertinent speculation: "no doubt Shuker is really referring to the giant marine reptiles of the Mesozoic, which were only distantly related to the dinosaurs," as someone with a PhD degree in Zoology and Comparative Physiology I am well aware that plesiosaurs, icthyosaurs, and suchlike are not dinosaurs! Indeed, if Moore had reviewed my book thoroughly, he would surely have spotted the following statement on p. 78: "...the plesiosaurs, which, although dominating the seas during the Mesozoic Era to much the same extent as the dinosaurs ruled the land, were not themselves dinosaurs (despite their frequent media appellation of "aquatic dinosaurs"). They were instead the predominant members of an entirely separate reptilian subclass, the sauropterygians".

Moore then declares: "Also, in several places he shows photos of dinosaur models with legs bent out to the side, whereas dinosaurs are now thought to have held their legs underneath their bodies." Bearing in mind that I did not construct

these models, and that the crucial phrase in his sentence is "thought to have been", I fail to see how Moore can claim these to be zoological errors of mine. That dinosaurs walked on erect an
limbs, not splayed-out ones, is, like so much else in paleontology, a theory, not unequivocally-confirmed fact, and can never be anything else in the absence of observations of living dinosaurs.
In relation to the possible pertinence of the Spicers' description of the Loch Ness monster to a reptilian identity for this cryptid, Moore

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voices the discourteous outburst: "At certain points, Shuker's logic is also rather poor". Yet if he had bothered to read that section of my book properly (and I am seriously beginning to wonder whether he has read my book properly at all), he would have discovered that the person who originally aired this view was none other than world-renowned British ichthyologist Dr. Denys Tucker, formerly of the British Museum (Natural History), whose opinions on matters relating to aquatic vertebrates are not dismissed lightly even by his most eminent zoological peers (let alone grade 8 students?).
Quite aside form that, when dealing with cryptids like the Loch Ness monster and Cadborosaurus for which accessible physical evidence that can be assessed taxonomically is conspicuous only by its absence, anecdotal evidence is of great importance when attempting to discover their taxonomic status. It is sheer nonsense to expect any measurable degree of success in this task if we choose to ignore eyewitness descriptions especially ones involving such close-range encounters as those experienced by the Spicers and William Hagelund.
As for radiocarbon dating of the supposedly recent Utah Camelops skull, I made the claim that this skull had not been dated after communicating with Dr. Adrian Lister, a world expert on fossil ungulates, who was not aware of any such dating for it. In view of the fact that his archives on this subject are far more extensive than mine, I saw no reason to doubt his opinion. Later, I received a copy of the

Nelson & Madsen paper form a correspondent, but sadly this was too late for me to incorporate its data in my book.

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Cryptozoology, is, by definition, a controversial subject, and therefore needs to gain scientific respectability, not lose it. I am delighted that

new generation of

cryptozoological enthusiasts is emerging in schools and colleges this is necessary if cryptozoology is to survive and thrive. Nevertheless, the situation whereby a grade 8

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student at school attempts (badly, in my view) to review a detailed work by a qualified

a preposterous scenario surely

zoologist

unparalleled in any other field of science? - is hardly likely to enhance cryptozoology's credibility rating.

I can think of no better way of ending this letter than with the following words, spoken by the Father of Cryptozoology himself, Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans (ISC Newsletter, vol. 3, No. 3, Autumn 1984). When asked if, in order to be a good cryptozoologist, one first has to be a zoologist, Dr Heuvelmans replied: "I think that's absolutely necessary. One cannot be a cryptozoologist without having been trained first in zoology. One has to have a good knowledge of zoology to be able to analyse all the reports properly to see whether they make sense from an anatomical perspective, from a physiological perspective, from an ecological perspective, from a zoogeographical perspective, and so forth." John Moore, take note!

Dr. Karl P.N. Shuker

West Midlands, England.

John Moore responds: I have the highest regard for Dr. Shuker's work, and as I stated in my review of his book, it "is a useful reference and an excellent review about what is presently known about cryptozoological 'prehistoric survivors' and will be enjoyed by all those interested in cryptozoology."

With regard to the supposed "zoological errors," what I should have said was that there are some incidences where, in my opinion, the general consensus in the literature does not favor Dr. Shuker's view.

As for the Camelops skull, I did not intend this to be a criticism of his book; I was merely informing the readers of an additional piece of information.

In these instances, I regret my choice of words and apologize for any confusion this may have
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caused.

Erratum

The editor apologizes to Richard Ellis for inadvertently omitting a short segment of Ellis' article The Longest Fish in the Ocean?" between pages 22-23 of TCR Vol. 1 No. 2. The segment left out is as follows: "... harmless. But because of its spectacular appearance on the beach (and occasional appearance in the water), several authorities such as ichthyologist J.R. Norman of the British Museum have firmly identified it with sea-serpent stories. In A History of Fishes, Norman wrote that 'the Sea Serpents of Aristotle, Pliny, and other classical authors..."

Addendum

by Ben S. Roesch

In further research following my article last issue entitled "Three Recent 'Sea Monster' Carcasses" (TCR, vol. 1 no. 2, pp. 15-17), I discovered an interesting note regarding the basking shark. In The Book of Sharks, Richard Ellis writes:

Young basking sharks differ form adults in one significant feature. They have an elongated snout, often with a hornlike protuberance on the end. While the mature sharks have an ordinary-looking head, some young specimens have a snout so long that it is said to resemble a short trunk.

This is significant because it would explain the especially pointed "snout" on the "Block Island Monster" (and the 1951 Hendaye carcass) reported on in my article. I had suggested that the "snout" was really the rostrum of a basking shark, but the new piece of information from Ellis' book is a more convincing answer. Incidentally, the "Block Ness Monster" was only 14 ft in length, and Hendaye only 16 ft, which is compatible with a young basking shark.

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Source: Ellis, Richard. 1994. The Book of Sharks. Alfred A. Knopf (New York): p. 91.

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A Compendium of Cryptids
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The Loch Ness Monster Wakes
The Loch Ness monster has been usually seen several times a year for quite some time, and 1996 was no exception. Two particular sightings, one complimented by a photo, made the newspaper headlines in 1996.
The first sighting occurred on June 13 at approximately 10:00 PM when Kate Munro, owner of the

Craigdarroch House, a hotel on the edge of Loch Ness, and her husband, as well as 14 guests, watched something plow quickly across the loch for five minutes, leaving a whitewater wake before submerging. The witnesses were stumped as to an explanation, and of course blamed it on the Loch Ness monster. One of the witnesses described the wake as being "as big as comes from a cruiser," and all those mentioned in a June 15 press release were sure that it was not caused by a boat ("there was no traffic on the loch"). They also reported that the source of the wake appeared to be something large just below the water's surface. All in all, this sighting is hard to explain, but as usual, is certainly not conclusive evidence for the existence of a large animal in the loch.

The second sighting occurred on August 11, and was made by Inverness art teacher Austin Hepburn. Like the sighting mentioned above, this one was also of something cutting through the loch, leaving behind a strange whitewater wake on the surface. Unlike the previous sighting. however, this one was complimented by a photo taken by Hepburn. According to an article in the Daily Mail, "[h]e had stopped his car on the loch's eastern shore near the village of Dores at around 4:00 PM, intending to take a scenic snapshot." After seeing a strange disturbance on the loch, which he said lasted for "about four minutes, and was travelling north at little more than a walking pace," he took the photo from about three-quarters of a mile away. The photo, as reproduced in the Daily Mail, does show a strange wake, but is inconclusive (my copy is a black and white photocopy, so perhaps the original is better). Hepburn claims to make out two black humps in the photo, but again, perhaps because of my less-than-perfect photocopy, I cannot reconcile his description with the photograph.

These two sightings are both strange, and immediately unexplainable, but cannot of course be conclusively shown to have been caused by a large hypothetical cryptid living in Loch Ness. Loch Ness is quite capable of deceiving the eyes by way of extended boat wakes, small "rogue waves, and various other physical phenomena, and these occurrences have quite likely resulted in many "monster" sightings in the past. The only thing the two sightings discussed here are certainly doing is to highlight the often frustrating history of evidence for the world's most famous lake monster.

Source: Anon. 1996. "Strange thing in Loch Ness - no rational explanation." San Francisco Chronicle, June 15. // Anon. 1996. “Is that you, Nessie?" Daily Mail (London), September 5: p. 19.

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Unidentified Egyptian "Beasts"

In early October 1996, an inexplicable and very interesting Reuters report came out of Cairo, Egypt which stated that, according to the Interior Ministry of Egypt, Egyptian police had shot two specimens of "unidentified wild animals [which had been] terrorizing people in the southern town of Armant for more than a month." Apparently, these beasts, described as resembling large hyenas or wild dogs, killed three people and injured dozens in a number of nocturnal attacks in the vicinity of Armant, a town in the Nile valley 500 km (310 miles) south of Cairo.

The locals call the animals salaawwa, a colloquial word which means "female ghoul", but "no one has yet identified the species," according to Reuters. One theory for their appearance is that they have migrated north from Sudan in search of food, but this still leaves their identity in the dark.

The two shot specimens were procured after "the police and local people with gun licences had set up ambushes around the town at night in the hope of killing or capturing the animals.

One
group shot, wounded and captured one of the animals as it was coming out of farmland to attack people's houses [and] another group shot one of them dead."

...

The Reuters report said that the injured individual was sent to the veterinary unit in Armant for examination, but as far as I know, no further information on these very mysterious creatures has surfaced. I am inclined to think that the animals were probably either some sort of canid crossbreed, much like the "coydogs" (a mixture between coyotes and domestic dogs) of North America or simply feral dogs, perhaps infected with rabies. It is also possible that the whole story was a hoax. These rather mundane explanations would also explain why no more has been heard

of the creatures in the international press.
Source: Anon. 1996. "Egyptian police shoot unidentified beasts." San Francisco Chronicle, October 9.
Expedition News
Field expeditions are always a major component in cryptozoological research, and plans for two cryptozoologically-related expeditions were disclosed in the international press recently. (The second, dealing with the giant squid, is not pure cryptozoology, but is still of interest to most cryptozoologists because of the cryptic nature of this elusive invertebrate.)
The first deals with the Loch Ness monster. Early this spring (1997), Charles Wyckoff (80, of Needham, Massachusetts) and Robert Rines (73, of Concord, New Hampshire) will be travelling to Loch Ness with various sophisticated photographic and sonar equipment to try and obtain some photos of Nessie. The two claim to have seen the creature in August 1971, and they also led the expeditions which took widely known underwater photographs which may be of the animal in 1972 and 1975. The photographs, the best-known of which seem to show the creature's flipper or head, are highly controversial, in part due to the fact that they were computer-enhanced, and the widely known versions to do not closely resemble the originals. In any case, we can only hope that this time around Rines and his colleague will turn up less controversial evidence of the existence of the Loch Ness monster.

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century
The second expedition moves to the deep sea for its quarry, the elusive giant squid (Architeuthis spp.). Ever since a number of giant squid were trawled up off New Zealand, plans have been in sub), an accomplishment which would be one of the greatest zoological occurrences of the the air for an expedition to the area to capture some video footage of a giant squid (from a mini- (see TCR vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 6-7). As of November 1996, however, the 5 million dollars needed for the endeavour, which would be led by Dr. Clyde Roper of the Smithsonian Institution, had not been raised. The potential sponsors, like the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution, were not willing to spend such an amount on an expedition that might or might not come back successful. Now, a new plan has been devised: early this year (though this time frame could change), remote-control television cameras will be lowered into the Pacific Ocean off New Zealand to an optimum squid-viewing depth of about 1500 ft, and will hopefully capture a passing giant squid on tape. If the expedition can gain any footage of a giant squid, they will have something to entice the sponsors to spend more money to obtain better film; and there is no doubt that footage of a live giant squid would draw a large audience. While the expedition may sound: little far-fetched, it is certainly worth trying.

Sources: Sullivan, Paul. 1996. "New England scientists hope finding Nessie is a Loch." The Boston Herald, August 6: p. 1, 14. // Miller, Laura. 1996. "The Quest for the Giant Squid (Interview with Richard Ellis)." http://www.salon1999.com/dec96/squid2961202.html.

Notes of Various New and Rediscovered Species

-- The Vu Quang reserve, on the border of Vietnam and Laos, is continuing to amaze biologists with its new-found biodiversity, and has now turned up a new species of fish. Dr. Nguyen Thai Tu, a Vietnamese scientist working with the World Wide Fund for Nature, discovered the 20-25 cm long fish, which weighs 3.3 lb and belongs to genus Crossocheilus. It has a silver underside and a gold stripe down its back and is in fact the second new fish found by the scientist in his work.

Source: Bille, Matt. 1996. "News and comment." Exotic Zoology vol. 3, no. 6 (November/December): p. 6 // Highfield, Roger. 1996. "New fish found in Vietnam." The Electronic Telegraph, September 28.

The Congo bay owl (Phodilus prioginei) was rediscovered this year on the Itombwe Massif, a rugged tract in eastern Zaire by a team from the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Zaire Institute for Nature Conservation. A female of the species, also known as the Itombwe owl, was the first specimen ever seen, much less procured, since the species was first described in 1951 on the account of one sole individual (there was, however, one unconfirmed sighting in Burundi in the 1970s). The rediscovery was reported on in an article by John Hart in Wildlife Conservation,

Source: Bille, Matt. 1996. "Rediscoveries: The Congo bay owl." Exotic Zoology vol. 3, no. 6 October 1996, p. 10.

(November/December): p. 1.

-- The cryptic warbler is a new species of songbird (genus Cryptosylvicola) that has just recently been discovered on Madagascar.

Source: Bille, Matt. 1997. "News and Comment." Exotic Zoology vol. 4, no. 1 (January/February): p. 2.

-- Acrobatornis fonsecai, a new genus and species of the oven bird family (Furnariidae), was

discovered recently in southeastern Brazil. Its common name is the Pink-legged Graveteiro, derived from its stout, bright-pink legs and feet. The small, arboreal bird also features black-and-grey plumage and acrobatic foraging behaviour by which it is almost always hanging upside down on leaves or creeping along the undersides of tree branches. An interesting note on the new

species' discovery is that its nests, made of sticks and built in the relatively dry forest canopy, are clearly visible from the main highway of Bahia state, Brazil. It was only recently first noticed by an amateur ornithologist named Paulo Fonseca, hence its species name. Unfortunately, as with many new species, A. fonsecai faces the danger of extinction; its home are trees that provide shade for cocoa plantations in the Bahia region, which was, until recently, a great source of income in the area. Now, the plantations have been ravaged by a to-this-point unstoppable "witches' broom' disease, and to keep money in the area flowing, the trees that once shaded the plantations are being cut for lumber. This obviously puts A. fonsecai in a tight spot, and we can only hope that measures are taken to preserve this unique species.
Source: Bille, Matt. 1997. "News and Comment." Exotic Zoology vol. 4, no. 1 (January/February): p. 2. // Line, Les. 1996. "New Bird Found in Brazil Owes Its Survival to Chocolate." The New York Times, November 19: B6. // Pacheco, José Fernando et al. 1996. "A New Genus and Species of Furnariid (Aves: Furnariidae) from the Cocoa-Growing Region of Southeastern Bahia, Brazil." The Wilson Bulletin vol. 108, no. 3 (September): pp. 397-433.
-- A tiny new frog species, Eleutherodactylus iberia, was discovered recently. It was found under decaying leaves on the floor of the tropical rain forest of Cuba's Monte Iberia. The frog, dubbed the "eleuth frog", is only 1 cm long, making it the smallest tetrapod (terrestrial vertebrate) in the Northern Hemisphere. It is dark brown in color, with a copper stripe running down its back.
Source: Bille, Matt. 1997. "News and Comment." Exotic Zoology vol. 4, no. 1 (January/February): p. 2. // Fountain, Henry. 1996. "Under Cuban Ferns, A Very Small Frog." The New York Times, December 3, 1996.
A recent survey of Laotian bats by the Wildlife Conservation Society uncovered 55 species. including 5 new ones.
Source: Bille, Matt. 1997. "News and Comment." Exotic Zoology vol. 4, no. 1 (January/February): p. 2.
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Feature Article
(In which we present a comprehensive research article of cryptozoological nature)
The Biology of the Giant Octopus
An Introduction to the Giant Octopus
The most widely-known piece of evidence for the giant octopus consists of a giant mound of flesh that was discovered in November, 1896, on a beach on Anastasia Island, which is near St. Augustine, Florida. Overall, the carcass, which was at least 23 feet long and 18 feet wide, resembled a gigantic octopus. According to contemporary evidence, there were several arms either attached to the body or lying nearby on the beach. The carcass was so tough that it was almost impossible to cut. It was soon called to the attention of a local naturalist and historian, DeWitt Webb, who thought the carcass was probably a giant octopus. Before long, word of it reached A. E. Verrill, a cephalopod authority who had played a key role in the discovery of the giant squid. Although he at first felt that it was a very large giant squid, after viewing photographs of the carcass Verrill agreed with Webb that it was a giant octopus. He published widely on the find and eventually gave it the scientific name Octopus giganteus. However, after he had examined some samples from the carcass that Webb had sent to him, Verrill decided that the carcass was that of a whale, most probably a deformed sperm whale. The carcass soon faded into obscurity, and its ultimate fate remains unknown.
In the late 1950s, however, biologist F.G. Wood was intrigued by the case after reading several

articles on the topic. A colleague of his, Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., analyzed two finger-sized pieces that he had cut from a sample that was preserved in the Smithsonian Institution. (Webb had sent these fragments, which were subsequently lost, to another authority on molluscs, W.H. Dall. In addition, Verrill's specimen was lost in a fire.) When viewed through a microscope, the connective tissue pattern of the 1896 specimen did not resemble either that of a whale or a giant squid, resembling, instead, that of an octopus. Several more recent studies on the samples have also yielded results favorable to the identification of the carcass as an octopus.

Shortly before finding the articles about the 1896 carcass, Wood heard stories about a giant octopus-like creature from various people in the Bahamas, including some respectable citizens. Local names for the creature include "Lusca" and "Him of the Hairy Hands." There have been possible traditions and claimed sightings of giant octopuses from all over the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean.

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Another development in the giant octopus story occurred in 1984. John P. "Sean" Ingham crab fisherman who worked in deep waters off Bermuda. After several of his crab traps (which were extremely large--at least one was 8 feet by 8 feet by 4.5 feet) were either damaged or entirely

missing, he decided that some large animal was responsible. Once when something was holding a trap down, his boat's sonar system revealed a pyramid-shaped thing about 50 feet high. Whatever

it was apparently started to pull Ingham's boat along in the water. Eventually the creature let go, and when examined at the surface, the trap had one of its sides pushed in. After further similar incidents in 1985, Ingham relocated his fishing operation to an area off Belize. Many, including Ingham himself, have thought that the creature responsible for the incidents was a giant octopus. (It is worth noting that some known octopuses often eat crabs.)

In May 1988, on a beach in Mangrove Bay, Bermuda, an 8-foot long carcass (later to be called the "Bermuda Blob"), which is widely believed to be a second specimen of the giant octopus, washed up.

The most recent development in the giant octopus case was an analysis of tissue samples of both of the possible giant octopus specimens by a team led by molecular biologist S.K. Pierce. They concluded that the 1896 carcass was a whale and the 1988 specimen was a fish. However, it has been argued that the study was flawed and that the results are not necessarily accurate.

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The Cryptozoology Review
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Censoring Cryptozoology: Background To Part IV
By Gary S. Mangiacopra
The following final segment of a four-part series dealing with the updated history of Octopus giganteus Verrill was rejected by the journal it was originally submitted to, Of Sea and Shore (Port Gamble, Washington). Although the first three instalments were published in that periodical, the final portion was not, due to an article published in 1995 in the Biological Bulletin: by Pierce etal. In summary, the authors of this article concluded that the 1896 carcass was, in reality, that of a beached whale. This opinion is in direct contrast to the position that I, and many others, have taken: that the remains were those of a gigantic octopus. Until further tests can be conducted on the extant portions of the 1896 tissue samples, this controversy cannot be resolved satisfactorily. As of the time of the writing of part IV (1994), our conclusions regarding what we might assume about this gigantic octopod were based upon only fragments of information. Although these conclusions may be valid if the 1896 carcass was that of a giant octopus, they would be invalid if it was shown that the remains were those of a whale.
Nevertheless, the authors of Part IV still consider it to be important that the final segment sees print, as, if it is shown that the 1896 carcass was indeed an octopus, our speculations may still be valid and may help acquire a specimen of this giant invertebrate.
In regards to the cancellation of the final part IV in Of Sea and Shore, it should be said that its editor, Tom Rice, an associate of mine for more than 20 years, was placed in a position where he really had no choice. This was because of the response of his readers, who favoured acceptance of the Biological Bulletin article and looked down upon the idea of giant octopuses. Even I will personally admit, if I had been in Rice's position, I would have killed Part IV myself! In the end I must thank Rice for allowing the publication of many of my pioneering cryptozoological articles, articles which other journals wouldn't even touch.
Also, Rice showed himself to be a man of scientific courageousness because he allowed space in following issues of Of Sea and Shore for a lengthy rebuttal towards the Biological Bulletin article by myself and my co-authors as well as letters to the editor on the topic. If, in the past, we had had more open minded editors like Rice, more cryptozoological articles and information could have been preserved in the annals of science, rather than discarded as worthless or unscientific. We are in a race preserving cryptozoological data - and we are losing it!
Source:
Pierce, Sidney K., Smith, Gerald N., Jr., Maugel, Timothy K., and Clark, Eugenie. 1995. "On the Giang Octopus (Octopus giganteus) and the Bermuda Blob: Homage to A. E. Verrill." Biological Bulletin 188: 219-230.
"Him of the Hairy Hands" Part IV:
Octopus Giganteus - Speculation on the "Eared Octopus"
By Gary S. Mangiacopra, Michel P.R. Raynal,
Dr. Dwight G. Smith and Dr. David F. Avery
Introduction
From the surviving historical facts and the analyses of the remaining tissue samples of Octopus giganteus, as presented in Parts I (1) and II (2) of this article, it must be at least considered quite

possible that a century ago a member of an unknown, gigantic species of octopod lived, died, and was beached off St. Augustine, Florida.

This documented fact cannot be ignored. Nor can we ignore the reports of encounters with other members of this marine invertebrate, as presented in Part III (3) of this article. If one of these creatures lived in 1896, a breeding population of these gigantic octopods must have existed then. But we must ask this question: Was the St. Augustine carcass one of the last lingering member of a species that was already heading towards extinction at the end of the 19th century, or is there still a stable breeding population of these gigantic octopods?

At the present time, the little that we can speculate about O. giganteus is just that - speculation based on fragments of information. To give an indication of the complexity of this cryptozoological mystery, one can perhaps compare it to another, now scientifically accepted, giant invertebrate of the seas: the giant squids, which were once considered to be nothing more than Norwegian legends. Over two centuries ago, Bishop Erik Pontoppidan wrote this about the Kraken, the Norwegian name for giant squids (Ley, 1948):

"Among all the foreign writers, both ancient and modern, which I have had opportunity to consult on this subject, not one of them seems to know much of this creature, or at least to have a just idea of it...."

Over two centuries later, this is still a valid statement about the North American version of the Kraken O. giganteus. Our knowledge of giant squids is based upon less than 100 stranded individuals found on beaches around the world since 1872, when this species was finally recognized by science (Roper and Boss, 1982). Yet during a century of time, only one giant octopus stranding has occurred, with a possible second stranding occurring in 1988.

The fact that there are many fewer strandings of giant octopods than giant squids can possibly be accounted for by several factors discussed below.

Number of Giant Octopod Species

There are at least three species of giant squids presently recognised to account for their numerous strandings: Architeuthis sanctipauli (from the southern hemisphere), A. japonica (from the northern

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Pacific), and A. dux (from the northern Atlantic). However, there is probably only one species of gigantic octopod.

The giant squids freely roam the world's seas, while the giant octopods, if they behave like their smaller relatives, are probably benthic creatures who seek the safety of their lairs. If territorial (like their smaller relatives) and nocturnal, they would be unlikely to roam from their lairs except for purposes of feeding and breeding, and then chiefly at night.

These assumed factors can account for the lack of significant numbers of alleged sightings of giant octopods. After all, what observer, in their ship on the sea's surface, would be in a favourable position to, by chance, see beneath them a gigantic octopod slithering across the ocean bottom in search of prey? Unless a chance surface appearance on the part of the octopus had been observed, the possibility of them being seen is very low.

Nevertheless, how many times in a century-and-a-half have living or nearly dead giant squids been observed on the ocean's surface? The problem becomes very apparent!

Population Density

Another matter to ponder is the possible population density of O. giganteus. Such an enormous animal would require a sufficient amount of feeding territory to sustain its huge bulk, and would protect its domain by driving away any competition from other members of its gigantic species. There would be a sparseness of individuals across a given geographical area. Yet a minimum

population density is always needed to keep an animal population stable and to prevent genetic inbreeding. Verrill (1897) speculated that there were hundreds, if not thousands, of these gigantic octopods. Even a minimum of several hundred individuals would be scattered over a considerable region, thus lessening the likelihood of a chance observation by man.

Geographical Range

Although the geographical range of O. giganteus was originally supposed to be limited to the Bahamas region, its range may in fact be far wider, as indicated by the reports discussed in Part III(3). We propose that the range of this species was (and probably still is): as far north as the eastern coast of Florida; as far east as the Bahamas Islands; as far west as the coast of Galveston, Texas, and the Mexican coasts; and as far south as the shores off Belize.

Until further reports can be acquired, it is uncertain if we are dealing with regional pockets of these giant octopods, or if the animal occupies this entire area. For the time being, we tentatively accept the latter position.

Predatory Habits

Information is scarce as to just what such a gigantic octopus might feed upon. F.G. Wood (in ISC Newsletter, 1983) stressed that smaller octopus members feed upon clams and crabs and was himself uncertain as to what anything the size of O. giganteus would prey upon. In contrast, Dr.

etc.).

Gerald Wood (1977) noted that most benthic octopuses lived on food which does not take an effort to capture, such as rotting flesh. However, the size of this giant octopus would require something

more substantial, perhaps bottom-feeding sharks.

Johnson (1978) has noted that common octopuses have eating habits that are at times quite exotic. An octopus that intrudes on the territory of another member of its species may run the risk of being devoured. Just prior to death, some individuals may even eat themselves.

It is possible that larger members of O. giganteus may supplement their food requirements by occasionally feeding upon intruders or smaller, immature members of the same species.

Contrary to local claims that gigantic octopods prey upon unsuspecting humans, human beings could not form a major part of their diet. Perhaps the Bahamian natives' traditions that the "Lusca" would reach out their tentacles and grab fishermen from their boats started from a few actual cases of such horrendous events, over many decades, which the surviving fishermen related to others. But to suggest that they actively prey upon fishermen regularly is, really, quite impossible, as there would be insufficient biomass (i.e., fishermen) to sustain them! In addition, such animals would have depleted the local fisherman supply rather quickly, and would certainly capture the attention of the local authorities.

Instead, what might be a very possible food supply for these large animals is the large shrimp, and, more importantly, the large, heavy crabs that were discovered in the 1970s-80s off the Bahamian coasts. The incidents with Ingham's large crab traps in 1984 indicate that these animals do feed, partly or primarily, upon crabs.

Behaviour Patterns

O.giganteus seems to be a deep water species, living in the 500 fathom (3,000 feet) range. This is supported by the fact that crab traps placed at that depth by Ingham were held down by something very large and strong, presumably a gigantic octopod. Their occasional surface appearance can be accounted for by several factors, which we will now discuss.

Encounters with giant squids on the surface are always when these giant invertebrates are in their death throes. Recent studies have indicated that the giant squids are actually suffocating from a lack of oxygen when they cross from the sea's cold depths into warmer waters (Brix, 1983). Could this same factor be deadly for the giant octopods? According to some Bahamian traditions, they are only seen on the surface when sick or dying. However, Mexican traditions say that they are only

seen rising to the surface on the full moon. In addition, inhabitants of Andros Island (one of the Bahamas) tell of the Lusca being seen in the inland "Blue Holes," which contain sea water diluted by fresh water. This would suggest that giant octopods can sustain themselves for periods of time in brackish waters far better than giant squids.
It can be surmised that although they are deep-sea animals, they can rise to the surface and even frequent shallow waters for periods of time.
Preferred Habitats
Based upon the behaviour of the smaller octopods, gigantic octopods would probably seek the safety of some protective shelter (lairs). F.G. Wood suggested this shelter was the rocky coasts east of the Bahamas. However, the Bahamas and Belize regions would offer numerous, available shelters for the giant octopods to inhabit, due to the underwater caverns and blue holes in these

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areas. It may be suggested that they venture out of their lairs to seek prey, and return to them for safety. This would be extremely important if researchers were determined to seek them out. The proposal by Wright (1961) to try and capture giant squids with a giant fishing troll would not work for such benthic creatures; while the results of Captain Sean Ingham with his bottom crabbing traps indicate that something like one of his traps would produce more positive results.
Zoological Classification
Throughout this series, the scientific name of Octopus giganteus Verrill, as created by Prof. A.E. Verrill (and, as commented by Lucas [1928], once given it cannot be rescinded) has been used to describe this species of gigantic octopod. However, recent indications suggest that this term may be inaccurate. The true octopus belongs to the family Octopodidae of the suborder Incirrata, and it has generally been assumed that the creature responsible for the 1896 stranding belongs to this family, as well. However, as noted by Verrill (1897) (see Part I[1]), photographs suggested to him that this carcass might have been related to the genus Cirroteuthis because two of the stumps of the stranded mass look like the remains of lateral fins which characterize this genus of swimming octopus. This would place it in the family Cirroteuthidae of the suborder Cirromorpha.
Class
Subclass
Cephalopods
Coleoidea
Order
Vampyromorpha
Octopoda
Decapoda
Suborder
Incirrata
Cirromorpha
Family Octopodidae Argonautide Cirroteuthidae
Genus-Species
Otoctopus giganteus Verrill
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In 1986, co-author M.P.R.R. proposed to change the generic name of O. giganteus from Octopus to Otoctopus (from Greek oton = ear), which means "the Giant Eared Octopus," as the lateral fins actually resemble projecting ears.
In addition, members of the suborder Cirromorpha have a single row of suckers and two rows of

hair-like cirri on their tentacles (the common octopus has two rows of suckers and no cirri on their tentacles). This unusual feature could possibly explain one of the traditional names that Andros Islanders give to this gigantic octopod: "Him of the Hairy Hands." O. giganteus could have received this name after an occasional sighting of one of these animals: with its tentacles extending from an inland blue hole or reaching out to grab the underside of a fishing boat, the fishermen would have noted that the tentacle appeared to be hairy, hence the name "Him of the Hairy Hands."

Present Status

As of 1997, Octopus giganteus Verrill (=Otoctopus giganteus [Verrill]) still remains in the shadowlands of zoology, not truly being accepted like the giant squids. It will not be accepted by the scientific community until a fresh - and rather large - specimen is acquired, despite the fact that there are indications that this gigantic species did - and still does exist. In 1988 the idea of obtaining video tape evidence of a giant octopod, by means of underwater television cameras suspended over crab traps, was proposed, but these plans have been hampered by lack of finances in these tight economic times.

Due to the loss of the Smithsonian Institution specimens, all that is left of the once 5 ton 1896 St. Augustine carcass is a few ounces of tissue which reside in a jar small enough to be held in a single hand. This is presently in the possession of Dr. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr. (Bradley, 1991; Clark, 1991a, 1991b). As for the possible second stranding in Bermuda in 1988, the tissue samples for it are in the possession of Dr. Eugenie Clark. It is hoped that further analysis will be conducted on both of these samples.

Conclusion

After a century of time, and two and a half decades after its rediscovery was publicized by Wood and Gennaro (1971), this series has presented the total sum of half-knowledge and half-speculation about this giant creature. Many have the right to question the findings made by ourselves, who are still continuing the research begun by Verrill and Wood on a species of giant octopod that does exist, despite the fact that we still know almost nothing about it, and that it will not even acknowledge its existence.

By presenting in print what information on this giant animal is now available, we may acquire enough additional knowledge to solve the riddle of this "Hairy Hand Giant" of the seas.

Acknowledgements

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The Beast of Gévaudan and Other "Maulers"

by Andrew D. Gable

For the residents of the tiny district of Gévaudan, nestled high in the Margeride Mountains of south-central France, the terror began one day in June of 1764. On that day, a young peasant from the village of Langogne was out tending her family's herd of cattle in the Forêt de Mercoire. Suddenly, a tremendous wolf-like animal loped out of the forest, heading towards the girl. Her dogs turned tail and ran at the sight of this terrifying apparition; the cattle charged at the monster. Seemingly undeterred by the cattle, the creature continued to make its way towards the young shepherdess. The cattle charged it once more, this time driving it back into the forest from whence it came (1).

This young woman was much luckier than many later victims of la Bête Anthropophage du Gévaudan (the man-eating beast of Gévaudan), for very few survived an attack by the monster. Descriptions varied widely, but most agreed that it was wolf-like, though nearly the size of a cow (Fig. 1). Its chest was wide, its tail long and thin with a lion-like tuft of fur at its end. Its snout was like that of a greyhound, and large fangs protruded from its formidable jaws. The beast was believed to be incredibly agile - it was credited with taking leaps of up to 30 feet (2). The Paris Gazette, carrying a story about the monster, commented that it was reddish in colour, that its chest was wide and grey, and that the hind legs were longer than the fore legs. Another account of the beast, published in the English Saint James' Chronicle, stated that the beast was probably a member of "a new species". Here we have what is quite possibly the first mention of the beast in a cryptozoological light (3).

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FIG 1. An engraving of the Beast of Gévaudan, drawn in 1765, at the time of the attacks
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Although the story of the Beast of Gévaudan is doubtless embellished greatly in terms of its size and other features.
the facts remain: some sort of large creature was ravaging the district, killing people more often than livestock. The
beast seems to have had a definite preference for attacking victims around the head, oftentimes crushing the skull and
eating the entrails. Wounds of this type were also displayed by victims of a similar creature which prowled Limerick.
Ireland, more than a century later.
After three long years of terror in the region and the shooting of "wolves" supposed to be the beast (by Antoine de
Beauterne, King Louis XV's chief huntsman), the monster was finally killed at the Sogne d'Aubert by a hermit
named Jean Chastel.
So who, or what, was the beast? Popular opinion at the time held it to be punishment from God, a Loup-Garou
(werewolf), or some sort of demon summoned by a sorcerer. (In fact, some claimed to have seen the beast in the
company of a man (4).) Many more believed that it was a wolf or some other natural creature, citing a number of
instances in which two or more beasts, presumably a mated pair with cubs, had been seen together (5). Other
explanations offered by the learned folk of the day held that the beast was a bear, a wolverine, or even a baboon.
Some modern researchers believe it to have been a serial killer who took advantage of a wolf in the area (6). Another
popular theory is that the beast was a wolf-dog hybrid (7).
A well-known Celtic sculpture commonly known as the "Tarasque" of Noves, found at the base of the Pyrenees in
France, depicts a large wolf-like animal similar to the Beast of Gévaudan. Each of its front paws rests on a human
head, and a human arm is under its large jaw (8). A similar sculpture found at Linsdorf, in Alsace, France, may
perhaps have been used to hold a human skull (9). These animals have been thought to be lions, wolves, bears, or
imaginary monsters (10)
A similar creature was referred to as the arenotelicon in medieval bestiaries. The arenotelicon, which was thought to
dwell in wild forests, was widely believed to be a European relative of the hyena or tiger. The creature had a serrated
ridge down its spine, feet armed with prodigious claws, a maned neck (a feature which appears on

some depictions of
the Beast of Gévaudan), and was either hairless or covered in short hair (11). A creature similar to the arenotelicon
was supposedly captured around 1530. According to some sources this happened in the Hauberg Forest, Saxony,
Germany (12), while others say it occurred in the Fannsberg Forest, Salzburg, Austria (13). It was "yellowish-
carnation" in colour (14).
There have also been creatures reported in more recent times that are similar to the Beast of Gévaudan. One could
perhaps refer to these mysterious creatures, which are often reported to kill sheep, as "maulers. The following list
details some of these modern reports.
No. 1. June 1764-June 1767; Gévaudan (now Lozère), France.
A series of sightings and killings occurred which was described above.
No. 2. May-September 1810; Ennerdale, Northumberland, England.
A creature killed sheep and tore open the throat and sucked the blood rather than devouring them (15).
No. 3. January-April 1874; County Cavan, Ireland.
An unknown animal killed at least 42 sheep. It tore open the throat, sucking the blood and eating a tiny piece
meat (or no meat at all). The creature left footprints resembling a cat's, but with claws (16)

of
No. 4. 17 April 1874; Limerick, County Limerick, Ireland.
A wolf-like animal killed sheep. Several persons, all of whom had been attacked by the creature, were sent to Ennis
Insane Asylum after developing a peculiar type of insanity (17)
No. 5. July 1893; Orel Oblast, Russia.
A beast similar to that of Gévaudan terrorized the village of Trosna. It attacked 10 women and children between the
6th and the 24th, killing 3; it was described as long, with a blunt snout and smooth tail (18).
No. 6. November 1905; Badminton, Gloucestershire, England.
An animal attacked and killed a number of sheep, sucking their blood and leaving "the flesh almost untouched" (19).
No. 7. 19 March 1906; Guilford, Kent, England.
An unknown animal ravaged area farms, killing 51 sheep in one night (20).
No. 8. April-December 1993; Plovdiv, Bulgaria.
A mysterious blood-sucking, cat-like creature which had glowing eyes had killed 16 people, including one Scottiz
Karpulsky (21)
These maulers are a strange lot indeed, skirting the line between the natural and supernatural as do so many cryptids.
Although the specifics of each mauler case vary greatly, some points are common to all. The typical mauler seems
to be long and dark-coloured, sometimes with a lighter patch on the chest, and often with small ears and short legs.
They seem equally comfortable on two legs or four. They are sometimes almost supernaturally fast, taking
enormous leaps of 20 feet or more. They also seem to have a great preference for attacking a victim, whether human
or animal, around the head or neck; a great many are credited with sucking the blood of the victim rather than
devouring the victim itself. A serrated back is mentioned occasionally, but this is a rare (and probably

invented)
detail, and many are credited with leaving tracks that appear to be a cat's but which show extended claws.
No previously proposed identification entirely fits the evidence. Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids do not account
satisfactorily for the blood loss in the victims, or the peculiar cat-like tracks the maulers leave.
But members of the carnivoran family Mustelidae, the mustelids (such as the weasel, otter and wolverine), share
many characteristics with maulers. They are typified as "small, long-bodied, short-legged animals, with thick, silky
fur, and ... a fetid odour" (22). This odour is given off during situations where the animal feels threatened, being
secreted from anal glands. Nowhere is this odour more apparent than in one of the family's representatives, the
striped skunk (Mephitis mephitis).
Another mustelid, the wolverine, is sometimes referred to as the "glutton," for its depredations can indeed be great.
Mustelids are fearless animals, attacking nearly anything they feel they have even a chance of bringing down. The
wolverine and many other members of the family have a preference for either lying in ambush in a tree and jumping
upon a victim's head, or leaping at the victim's throat.
One species in particular, the pine marten (Martes martes), fits many characteristics of maulers almost perfectly.
The pine marten is a small, weasel-like animal (barely bigger than an average house cat) that preys on rodents and
birds, occasionally eating eggs or fruit. The pine marten is unusually agile, living most of its life in trees. It has a
dark brown, almost black, colour and a cream-coloured patch around the throat. Most reports of maulers are from
areas within the pine marten's range, and it would leave "clawed-cat"-type tracks. (One difference, however, is that
martens are nocturnal while most maulers seem to be diurnal; however, this detail is a relatively minor one.)

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I am not proposing that maulers are pine martens in the strictest sense; pine martens are far too unimpressive. There
may be a subspecies, however, that co-exists with its substantially smaller conspecifics, which would account for
sightings of maulers and accounts of their depredations. Maulers seem to kill mainly sheep; a marten of normal size
regularly feeds off of large rabbits and other animals larger than itself. Sheep are not large animals--it wouldn't take a
very large creature to kill a sheep, or to leave the size tracks maulers often leave.
Many of the supernatural-seeming attributes can be explained plausibly by a mustelid identification, such as the
insanity caused by the bite of some of these creatures, which could be explained as a concussion caused by the

dropping of the animal onto the skull; to a shard of bone penetrating the brain and causing infection; or to trauma
from the attack. The seeming ineffectiveness of weapons against maulers (particularly the Beast of Gévaudan) can be
attributed to something as obvious as the speed and agility of these creatures.
In conclusion, I propose that the mauler is a new subspecies of the pine marten. We may typify the appearance of
the mauler as about 2 feet in height, 8 feet in length, black in colour, with a cream-coloured or white patch on the
chest. The animal has somewhat cat-like feet, and has a rather elongated body and is exceptionally agile.

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Reviews and Resources
Books
Southwest England's Small Carnivorans: A Case of Ferreting Through the Literature
by Darren Naish
A review of: The Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the Westcountry by Jonathan Downes. STP/JD (Exeter) 1996. £7.50. 105 pp., spiral bound, ISBN pending.
Without doubt, there must be only a handful of books dedicated exclusively to Britain's small carnivorans (1), Jonathan Downes' new book goes a few steps better: it is the only book thus far that is devoted entirely to the small crypto-carnivorans of England's West Country - the area covered by the counties of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset.
....
Early on in this new book, Downes writes "the larger mysterious carnivores of the region have been dealt with elsewhere in such exhaustive detail that this author cannot hope to compete" (p. 7). Indeed, Britain's big cats are so well publicized as to be tedious, and numerous texts have been devoted entirely to consideration of them (2, 3, 4, 5) Wolverines have also been mentioned in texts recently (6) and a population of strange, melanistic felids generically referred to as Kellas cats have also been given extensive discussion (7, 8). A further selection including binturong, bear and hyaena, not to mention various canids, are also carnivorans recently recorded as having been abroad in the British countryside.
Unlike the majority of texts cited above however, Downes has far from restricted his interest to felids - he focuses instead mainly on mustelids - and has succeeded in crystallizing a vast body of hitherto unpublicized literature. All of this goes towards proving the status of Britain's carnivoran fauna more complicated, and perhaps more diverse, than previously imagined. Not only that, but Downes furthermore goes about showing that Britain's present day carnivoran fauna may be more diverse than traditionally reckoned. For, analyzing the historical records, Downes has compiled numerous accounts that call into serious question the supposed regional extinction dates for the Polecat (Mustela putorius), Pine marten (Martes martes) and Wildcat (Felis silvestris) as announced in Langley and Yalden's influential paper of 1977 (9).
The 105 pages of this book include four chapters, each of which is devoted to the four main subject areas - wildcats, polecats, pine martens, and other martens. There is a foreword by Dr. Karl Shuker in which Downes' research is highly praised. There is then a quite excellent introduction in which the West Country carnivorans are nicely put into the broader picture of British cryptozoology. Finally, following a conclusion, there are four appendices. Each presents or discusses data either just outside the scope of the four main chapters, or simply worthy of inclusion in a

book about smaller mystery carnivorans. These include notes on the controversial Irish wildcat, mustelid hybrids,
and a further variety of mysterious mustelids. Though the latter animals are largely, as yet, unsubstantiated, they
further suggest unprecedented variety in Britain's carnivoran fauna. Frustratingly, this book lacks both a contents
page and an index.
Despite his self-proclamation as a "Fortean Zoologist", those of us whose interests are more or less strictly limited
to the "flesh and blood" side of cryptozoology need not fear. Downes does not speculate on teleportation or inter-

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dimensional transportation as a way to "explain" the presence of his cryptids. There is brief mention (p. 36) of
"acausal synchronicity" (a.k.a. "remarkable coincidence") with regard to a Cornish sighting of polecats - the first for
fifty years - which occurred at about exactly the same time as Downes was engaged in a phone conversation on the
very subject of Cornish polecat sightings. There is also the suggestion (p. 87) that certain large grey cats from
Ireland are synonymous with the Irish Fairy cat, or Cait Sidh, an entity apparently alluded to by notorious
"surrealchemist" Tony Shiels. This recalls the extremely similar suggestion of Downes that large, albatross-type
birds seen over England may be the same as "the Celtic Ean Sidh or Fairy bird" (10), yet again one of the mythical
creatures mentioned by Shiels. While Shiels may be greatly respected in some fortean circles, discussion of his far
from serious musings is not warranted in a zoologically sensible text.
One of my main criticisms of certain outspoken "Forteans" is that they seem inordinately fond of imagining all
scientists to be bald-headed lab workers in white coats, as if there is some fundamental "them and us" dichotomy
existing between professional scientists and non-scientists. Downes is, thankfully, not so media-blinded. His cases
of what would seems to be stereotyping of scientists only go as far as his statement: "the official view of the
scientific 'establishment' [his quote marks] is that the zoofauna of Great Britain is both completely known and
relatively static" (p. 6). In its broadest sense, I would say that this is at odds with the new, fast-changing face of
Britain's ecosystems as championed by biological scientists in many fields (11). Evident from this new book is that
Downes is able to shift quite smoothly from what is traditionally "science" to what is certainly, traditionally, not: a
noticeable trend in the most open-minded contemporary researchers.
Downes has obviously, to his credit, gone to great pains to contact numerous researchers, curators and

eyewitnesses
in his quest for cryptic carnivorans. This means that much previously unpublished material is included. However, I
must point out that a record I submitted myself (ref. 7 of chapter 3) has been misrepresented (p. 43). Downes writes:
"In Hampshire, I have a probable record from the late 1980s when an animal which appears to be [a Pine marten]
was reported by some schoolboys on an "Outward Bound" course in the New Forest." In actual fact, there were two
animals, not one, and they were not reported "by some schoolboys," but rather by one of the staff, Mr M.C. Orman.
At the time of the sighting he was waiting alone at a checkpoint.
Chapter one, devoted to the Wildcat and other British felids, introduces the extreme confusion that surrounds the
issue of whether pure-bred Wildcats still exist or not. This is a complex area that has been analyzed in some detail
(12) and there is quite a body of literature, dating from the early 1960s (13) to the present, that discusses the
importance of hybrid specimens in anatomical definitions of non-catus Felis silvestris subspecies. However, Downes
does not do justice to the area - his only real discussion of it is limited to quotation of a brief news item published in
Animals and Men 3 (14) (though Downes incorrectly cites Animals and Men 4) where officials were unable to
determine whether a cat shot by a gamekeeper was a true Wildcat or not. He then uses this case as "evidence" that
true Wildcats are simply not distinguishable from feral domestics! While it may be that some of Downes' accounts
suggest the presence of complex introgressive hybrids between Wildcats and domestic cats, he does not allude to the
true differences found between Wildcats and domestic cats, and which have been statistically demonstrated as being of
importance in the differentiation of introgressive and purebred populations. Clearly the area is inextricably difficult to
resolve, and generalizations such as those used in this review and, less forgivably, those in Downes' book, cannot
adequately provide review.
Furthermore, many of the Wildcat-like animals Downes describes are probably little more than large feral domestic
cats. While they are still of interest to the cryptozoologist because of their resemblance to true Wildcats, it is worth
noting that large domestic cats can be enough like Wildcats for there to exist considerable confusion. Fig. 1 is a
photo of an especially large domestic cat called Toby, whom I visited in 1991 (shortly before his accidental
death). Toby's head and body length was 70.4 cm, and his tail was 31.7 cm, giving a total length of 102.1 cm. This
compares favourably with (authenticated) record-holding British Wildcats - they reached total lengths of 99 cm and

110 cm (15). Though it does not relate to any of Downes' conclusions, it is also worthy of note that

Toby's
morphology and markings are almost exactly the same as those of the cat photographed during Di Francis' 1981
researches in Tonmawr, Wales. Francis has repeatedly stated that this animal is a juvenile example of the indigenous
felid she believes in (4, 5, 8), but it is evidently a large feral domestic cat.
FIG 1 Toby, a domestic cat more than a meter in total length. Photo by author.
It is also worth commenting here on what Downes' writes regarding the extremely controversial Irish wildcat (both
in chapter 1 and in appendix 1). Officially this animal does not exist but there is various anecdotal evidence
suggesting that it does, or did, and Downes recounts some of this. Particularly useful is his reproduction of the
original figures that depict feline jaws found in Irish subfossil deposits in 1904 (p. 15). These bones, described by
R.F. Scharff in 1906 (16), were believed by him to represent indigenous Irish wildcats most closely related to
African wildcats (F. s. lybica), and Downes accepts this as an exciting possibility (p. 14). Scharff also wrote of his
discovery of an "extremely small race of cats in the New hall and Barntick caves" (16) and Downes writes: "[This]
provides what is, to my knowledge, the only tantalizing fragment of evidence for the past existence of another Irish

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mystery felid" (p. 14).
However, it has long been established that Scharff's so-called subfossil wildcats are most probably Bronze Age
domestic cats introduced by humans (17). Certainly Felis species do not occur in strata which contain Irish fauna
unaffected by human invasion. Secondly, the existence of a second, "extremely small race of cats" has been fairly
convincingly put down to Scharff's inability to diagnose sexual dimorphism amongst the material (17). In fact,
Scharff has been criticized for being too keen to accept data as evidence for the Irish wildcats he so evidently wanted
to believe in (he also insisted that a cat skin from Donegal,presented at a Zoological Society of London meeting in
1885, was of a true wildcat (18) - his colleagues, however, were quite sure it was a skin from a feral domestic cat
(19)). In his wonderfully complete book on Irish mammals (20), Fariley, with regard to Scharff's quest for Insh
wildcat evidence, even wrote: "In this he was far too credulous and was ready to swallow statements where he should,
at least, have expressed some skepticism, for every alleged specimen of the wildcat so far produced in Ireland has
invariably proved to be a domestic pussy which was living off the land" (p. 86).

The subfossil material Downes refers to, therefore, is no longer seen as being anything to do with Irish wildcats.
Downes was obviously unaware of some of the pertinent literature
Chapter two discusses the Eurasian polecat (Mustela putorius) and its close relatives. Again, this is a complex area
as it would seem that introgressive hybrid populations that have arisen across Britain as gone-wild domestic ferrets
(often referred to as M. furo) have interbred with wild polecats. Downes argues quite convincingly that the two types
are not truly distinguishable. It must therefore be wondered if sightings of "polecats" that postdate official extinction
dates were ever true polecats at all and, ironically, as polecats are presently reported to be expanding in range and
numbers (21), may we be seeing, as Downes has suggested, the spread of "a new and healthy mustelid whose
population is gaining strength and numbers throughout the region" (p. 37)?
I see no reason to disagree with any of this and I was also pleased to see Downes noting that Mustela species other
than the Eurasian polecat may be implicated in ferret ancestry. Some mammalogists, for example, believe ferrets to
be a domesticated form of the Asian Steppe polecat (M. eversmanni) (22) (though I am rather doubtful of Downes'
suggestion that Black-footed ferrets [M. nigripes] may have contributed to the North American ferret gene pool!).
The taxonomy of the new hybrids may therefore be far beyond our present level of resolution.
Chapter three of this book is devoted to the Pine marten. It makes fascinating reading, not just because some of the
sightings (postdating the official extinction dates of Langley and Yalden [9]) give insight into the behaviour of this
mustelid (e.g. pp. 49-50 provide accounts of tree-top squirrel-chasing behaviour reported in Devon at least as recently
as 1991), but also because the late great Pine marten expert H.G. Hurrell is intimately implicated in the entire saga.
Hurrell kept and bred Pine martens, and Downes describes Hurrell's remarkable training of them (p. 60): they were
apparently "free", but returned to him for feeding (23), With all these considerations, and others, in mind, Downes
goes as far as suggesting that Hurrell actually undertook a secret reintroduction of martens into Devon's Forestry
Commission land (pp. 57-61), thus explaining the apparent presence of the animals long after their supposed
extinction there between 1870 and 1880. I initially considered this to be a very bold and unfounded speculation, but
having reconsidered the issue I am not so sure. While he includes the comments of other researchers (who also have
reason to suspect that Hurrell attempted a marten reintroduction program), I am surprised that Downes did not

FIG 2 (Facing page). Smaller British carnivorans discussed by Downes. Clockwise from centre: Pine marten (Martes martes), Wildcat (Felis silvestris), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Stoat (Mustela erminea), Polecat (Mustela putorius) and Beech marten (Martes foina). Illustration by author.

comments on or include Hurrell's own observations on reintroduction. Writing in 1968, Hurrell indicated that, not
only was he aware of the possibility of marten reintroduction to the West Country, he also considered similar
ventures elsewhere "amazingly successful". Furthermore, by inference he implied that Pine martens should be
reintroduced (24). So, after all, I feel that Downes has done a superb job in interpreting the data.
Chapter four of this book provides the real "punch". Downes has gathered enough testimony to drop quite a bomb in
British zoological circles: he suggests that the Beech marten (Martes foina) may actually be a part of the modern,
native British fauna. The evidence for this is entirely circumstantial and in my opinion not wholly reliable, being
based on a number of accounts from the late 1800s. It would seem that a number of workers from this time believed
both Pine and Beech martens to be present in Britain. However, Downes is not the first reviewer to remark upon this
situation - in their 1891 text on mammals (25), Flower and Lydekker wrote "[the Beech marten] inhabits the greater
part of the continent of Europe, but is more southern than [the Pine marten] in its distribution, not being found in
Sweden or Norway, nor, according to the investigations of Mr. Alston, in the British Isles, although included in
their fauna by all earlier writers..." (p. 583). As Shuker correctly notes in the forward (p. 3), belief in the Beech
marten as a British native "eventually vanished from the records - sinking forever into the morass of scientific
anonymity that has claimed many other cryptozoological victims in the past."
Oddly, the one retrieved specimen of British M. foina that Downes refers to, a roadkill found between Exeter and
Exmouth in 1979, cannot be used as evidence for M. foina existence in Britain as some workers were convinced that
it was an American marten (M. americana). Also, the fact that 19th century workers believed M. foina to be a British
resident - in cases they even listed it alongside the Pine marten - may be due to lack of comparison between variable
British Pine martens and European martens. Communications and access to literature and specimen collections were
far poorer in those days, and numerous examples of early scholars believing in the presence of a particular species in
a particular area have turned out to be erroneous. In the late 1700s, for example, it was stated that the Dormouse
(Muscardinus avellanarius) was to be found in Ireland (26). More pertinent is that it was often thought that both
are certainly absent (28).

Weasel (Mustela nivalis) and Stoat (M. erminea) were to be found together on Ireland (27), whereas in fact Weasels
Downes states that Martes foina was, during the Pleistocene, a British denizen, and he cites Maurice Burton's 1976
book (29) for conformation of that. However, having surveyed the Pleistocene paleontological literature, I can find
paper
no record of a fossil or subfossil British M. foina. No mention is made of this species in Stuart's comprehensive and
from 1974 (30), though numerous other European vertebrates no longer found in Britain are.
classic
I am therefore extremely doubtful, in view of the absence of any hard data, of the suggestion that Martes foina is, or
has ever been, a British resident. With regard to the absence of fossils, the non-skeptic might point out that, as
mentioned by the great authority on Pleistocene mammals, Björn Kurtén (31), Pine and Beech marten bones and
that needs firm evidence to back it.
teeth are actually very difficult to distinguish. Downes' hypothesis therefore remains a viable possibility, but one
The book nicely compliments with its illustrations. Particularly interesting are those of various taxidermic
specimens - these include a Pine marten from Truro Museum (possibly an animal collected in the West Country,
though Downes was unable to confirm this) and an "unidentified mustelid in the window of a butcher's shop in
Stockbridge". The latter animal demonstrates nicely the wonderful obliteration of data the taxidermist can
accomplish: whatever the animal is (it is a white, Stoat-like mustelid), it is no longer identifiable. I found this
interesting as I was recently confronted with a similarly nondescript mustelid in the collection of Plymouth's
Museum and Art Gallery. Large, pale brown and with a broad, flat skull, it seemed to be a mink (certainly it was not

the same as the Pine marten specimen which may or may not be kept at Plymouth, as Downes suggested to me
[32]).

Numerous local maps are included amongst the illustrations. Unfortunately, not only are they unattractive and
contain far too many names, they lack scales. The reader without detailed knowledge of Britain's geography may also
find it extremely difficult to imagine the relative position of the areas illustrated within the British Isles.
As mentioned above, Downes takes issue with the local extinction dates created by Langley and Yalden (9) for
Britain's three rarer carnivorans. With respect to this end, I feel that Downes has succeeded admirably. Time and time
again, Downes is able to cite records where one of the three species has been identified in an area after Langley and
Yalden assigned it to extinction there. And as noted above, the exact taxonomy of some of these forms has been

made almost hopelessly complex by the extensive hybridization that has occurred between them and their closely
related domesticated relatives. In fact, having become fully acquainted with Downes' entirely reasonable arguments, it
does seem that humanity's impact on the genetic viability of Britain's true-bred carnivorans has been greater
thought.
than
Though the taxonomy of some of these forms is still confused, especially if they are introgressive hybrids, Downes
does not appear to agree with widely accepted taxonomic allocations for some of them. For example, he consistently
refers to the Scottish wildcat as a distinct subspecies of Felis silvestris Fs grampin As far as I can tell, however,
this subspecies is best regarded as one that has been sunk into F. s. silvestris. Dr. Andrew Kitchener, one of Britain's
authorities on felids, writes "After looking at the good series of wildcat skins in the Royal Museum of Scotland in
Edinburgh, I can only agree [that F. s. grampia does not warrant subspecific rank], as there is a a range of coat colour
from the dark grampia-type of Scotland to the paler silvestris typical of continental Europe." (33) Similarly,
Downes refers to the domestic cat as F. catus whereas it is now universally regarded as a subspecies of F. silvestris.
Downes seems to have relied on older texts that do not reflect present taxonomic thinking, as shown by his use of
Lieberkind's text from "the mid sixties".
Admittedly, what genus you allocate a cat species to is still more a matter of opinion than anything else: felid
taxonomy is still controversial I agree with those authors who have adopted a phylogenetic approach and have split
up normally paraphyletic genera (Felis being the ultimate example) (34). Lynx stands alone as a genus by this
reasoning, rather than being part of Felis as listed by Downes (p. 16).
Downes also fails to remark upon the extreme confusion that exists over the validity of marten species. For
example, the number of species in Martes varies from 4 to 8 depending on the authority consulted (35, 36), and
some mammalogists consider Sable (M. zibellina), Pine and American martens to be the same species. This clearly
confuses matters with regard to the identity of the animals sighted in Britain.
These taxonomic issues aside, there are also a number of technical errors. Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans did not, actually,
coin the term "cryptozoology" in his 1955 book Sur la Piste des Bêtes Ignorées (nor in its 1958 English edition, On
the Track of Unknown Animals) as Downes states (p. 5) (37). Downes refers to the "weasel family" within the
Mustelidae (p. 34) - presumably he actually means "weasel genus", as "family" has a strict and specific meaning in
such an instance. Also, Downes describes the Stoat (Mustela erminea) as "the second most common carnivore in
Britain after the fox" (p. 39). However, population figures for all of Britain's mammal species, published

in 1995
(38), actually have the Stoat as Britain's most common native carnivoran (after feral cats at 813 000) with a
population of 462 000, followed by the Weasel (M. nivalis) at 450 000. The Red fox (Vulpes vulpes), with a
population of around 240 000, is less abundant than both of these species and is even out-numbered by the Badger
(Meles meles) whose population is presently at 250 000 or so (38). Finally, mention is made of the 1992 BBC TV
series "Carnivores" (ref. 22 of chapter 4): the series was actually called "The Velvet Claw.
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As has, hopefully, become clear in this review, this book is an invaluable contribution to the literature. However, it
is let down by its editing and quality of print. Many blocks of text are placed extremely badly on the page, so much
so in places that the ends of lines are cut short and information is lost.
As for the editing, there is barely a single page devoid of at least one typographical error. There are also numerous
problems with the bibliography. Most noticeably is that the format of references throughout is inconsistent and very
few of the more than 240 citations actually include all appropriate information. By far the biggest problem is that
Downes has either been unable to, or has failed to, provide a proper source for several otherwise useful pieces of
information. Learning of a "race of 'polecat' living wild in Sutherland (immediately before the first world war)" that
was "notable for its narrow skull" (p. 36 of chapter 2) I was dismayed to find (ref. 40 for chapter 2) that "I have, I am
afraid, mislaid this reference"! (However, I was later able to find it for myself: TETLEY, H. 1939. "On the British
polecats." Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond. 109B: 37-39). There are several other instances in the bibliography of similarly
matching citation numbers in the text!
"mislaid" information. Also, in one case (p. 21) there exist the references in the bibliography, but there are no
For readers outside of Britain, I have little doubt that British cryptozoology must seem to be very much an
idiosyncratic, self-obsessed and perhaps mundane field. However, while I suspect that Downes' book may be of more
interest to cryptozoologists resident in Britain, it should still have broader appeal both to anyone interested in small
carnivorans in general, or in cryptozoology as a global discipline. Despite the issues of contention and cases of
fauna.
inaccuracy discussed in this review, I recommend the book as a detailed examination of one part of Britain's crypto-
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End Page
(By which we inform you of various important matters)
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Coming Soon in TCR: Enigmatic beaked whales (by Darren Naish), a review of sea monster carcasses from around the
world (by Ben S. Roesch), ancient mesoamerican cryptozoology (by Andrew Gable); rediscovered mongooses (by Jon
Downes); mysterious tracks in a Mexican cave (by Ben S. Roesch), great news coverage and much more! The next issue will
be out in late May or June.